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"GRAZIELLA," BY F. AUGUSTE RENOIR

FRENCH IMPRESSIONISTIC PAINTINGS ACQUIRED

The general tendency in nineteenth century art was toward the realistic. Its accomplishment was in mastering visual realism. In the middle of the century Courbet sounded a note of realism that was answered in the still more intimate picturing of nature by the Barbizons, such as Corot. By them life was represented schematically rather than as seen. Their greys

inadequately expressed light, sunshine, or the colors which come from light. In fact, Turner and Constable should be credited with discovering the separation of light's spectrum colors to produce greater brilliancy, light and atmospheric vibration.

An undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the art on hand culminated in a revolution against

formulae slavishly followed. For the material on hand was the product of degenerate Italianism derived from the School of Fontainebleau which Louis XIV reduced to a system. As a result artists returned to the source itself, life and nature. Their most typically national art has always been created to satisfy vision, without appealing to the intellect.

A group of pictures recently purchased in France by Albert Kahn, Commissioner, exemplifies the French tradition from the period just after Corot and Daubigny. This art has been broadly classed under the name "Impressionism." The first picture to be considered is still transitional, however, not yet entirely free from Barbizon characteristics.

Such is Eugene Boudin's "*Le Coup de Soleil*." Still using grey tones it represents light, and transparent atmosphere. It is an unusually good example, chosen from several representations of the artist's important period.

True Impressionism found its first great achievement in Monet. A few words explaining its theories may be helpful. According to its exponents, objects on the earth have no fixed color. Different colors are produced by the different wave lengths of the light vibrations and by the intensity or obliquity of the rays. Accordingly, as light vibrations strike objects of different substances and

surface textures these various rays are refracted or absorbed, affecting the vision of the beholder or disappearing in the objects, as the case may be. Thus objects appear to be colored themselves. But even the individual objects appear of different colors when complicated by the refraction of rays from other more or less nearby objects.

Edgar Degas, represented by the recent purchases "*Portrait de Femme*," "*Deux Femmes Assises*," "*Dancers in the Greenroom*" and "*Landscape and Dancers*," is an unattached genius, the synthesis of French art in his period.

Some of his best subjects are the ballet scenes in which are evidenced a keen understanding of life's philosophy and psychology. His ability to catch movement in three dimensions is here best expressed. He emphasized points by exaggeration. He obtained harmonies of quiet low-intensity colors livened by a spot of brighter hue, reminiscent of Velasquez and Whistler.

The picture of the seated woman is rich in velvety blacks with touches of pink to give life. A dominating realism of character is expressed in the plastically modeled face of this unmistakably French type. Her's is a thinking mind, capable of various emotional reactions.

Manet should be regarded as the initiator of this visual realistic movement. While he did not di-



"CABARET BRETON," BY LUCIEN SIMON

vide tones into their color hues any more than Degas, he first juxtaposed big spots of unshaded tones, simplifying in the Byzantine manner.

Although ridiculed for thirty years, from his early work in 1856, he inspired friends to develop along other progressive lines and eventually triumphed in his own sphere. He was the leader in a group that included Monet, Pissarro, Sisley and Renoir.

M. Camille Pissarro, represented by "*Vieux Remparts*," owed much to Turner and Manet for his light

effects. He is the link between Jonkind and Monet. Rustic scenes with country folk of ordinary physique are typically his own. Always painting with great luminosity, he soon began to separate tones, adopting the pointillist juxtaposition of tiny circles of colors.

Claude Monet is the creator and scientist of true Impressionism. Inspired by Monet and Pissarro he technically began where Boudin left off.

He represented the visible as perfectly as was possible. Of the several series depicting the same

subject under different light conditions, one of the best is that of the "*Lily Pond*."

Alfred Sisley is represented by "*Church at Moret, after the Rain*." He was the last of the original group of true Impressionists. His typical lilac tones evidence a tendency toward the sweet and pretty, as this picture proves.

In "*Graziella*" by F. A. Renoir, are summed up the ideas and methods of Impressionism. Designing in simplified forms, he became interested in the life and character of flesh. His mastery of depth and color finally resulted in an assimilation of these several characteristics to produce poetic rhythm of life seen decoratively. Profiting by the scientific research of the earlier men, he was the first to do the great creative work. His pictures show the spark of genius.

His best paintings are found where figures of women are the subject. Placing light against light practically without shadows, he balanced lines of active stress, thus transforming action into movement, the static to plastic life. His emotion is more intense than Monet's; his picture a cosmos, complete in itself. "*Graziella*" is no exception in such respects.

About 1880 a more intense Impressionism was attempted by Seurat and Signac. The former juxtaposed the principal hues of tones and, by computing the theo-

retical links between such colors, added them on the canvas.

Henri Le Sidaner, whose "*Tea Table*" was selected from his group of twenty-five in the Carnegie International Show this year, is a Neo Impressionist of the school established by Seurat. His example is impressionistic in method but a psychological study rather than a realistic visualization. Other intimists, as they are called, are Cottet, Simon, E. R. Menard and Henri Martin. All are represented by recent purchases. Cottet's and Simon's pictures are in the realistic vein. "*Cabaret Breton*" in broad white, red, blue and black spots is thus after the tradition of Manet, but of greater plasticity and subjective spirit.

Henri Lebasque is comparatively unknown in America. Already France has great appreciation for his art and looks to him for even more important creation in the immediate future. In certain pictures the surface treatment of figures recalls the Neo Impressionistic St. Denis, while the plastic, life-like character was inspired at least by the Renoir method. He is surely one of the creative artists in this movement.

Great creative work has resulted from Impressionism in America, Holland, Spain, Italy, the Scandinavian countries and Germany. Another great field of art has been developed as the result of Impressionism, namely Illustration.—R. P.